

What's Up at Sha'ar Zahav

Israeli Consul Ishmael Khaldi
FRIDAY MAY 9, 7:30. Israeli Consul Ishmael Khaldi will speak during services and be available afterwards on this Shabbat. We hope that you join us for this exciting opportunity.

Azkarah—A Community Healing Service
WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 6:00 PM. The azkarah service, led by Cantor Sharon Bernstein and Rabbi Eric Weiss, gives us an opportunity to honor our loved ones and acknowledge our losses. To have the name of a loved one read, please contact the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center at 415-750-4197 or jewishhealing@ioaging.org.

Jeffrey A. Miller Scholar in Residence Weekend
FRIDAY, MAY 16 7:30 PM–SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 17. We are proud to announce Dr. Joel L. Kushner of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion as our Spring 2008 Scholar in Residence. For detailed information, see page 4.

Congregational Meeting
MONDAY, MAY 19, 6:00 PM. All members should come to this once-a-year meeting to read the budget, hear the annual report, and catch up on what's happening at Sha'ar Zahav.

(continued on page 4)

Dan Bellm's "Practice"

Dan Bellm is a long-time member of Sha'ar Zahav, and is married to the congregation's former rabbi, Yoel Kahn. Dan is a published poet, with a new book out from Sixteen Rivers Press, Practice.

JGF: Most people in the synagogue know that you are a poet, but many may not know that you've written several of the prayers we say at shul.

One is in my new book, *Practice*. People mention the Geulah prayer that comes right before Mi Chamocha, so they know I write liturgy. But I don't mind being anonymous as a prayer writer.

Writing liturgy is linked to my poetry, since I've been writing midrash for years, and it's all collected now in my book. It's different though than writing poetry.

It's not so much that my poetry is personal or private but that writing for liturgy takes a particular kind of work. Most of my attempts have not felt that successful to me. It has to be somehow speaking in a personal but also public voice, that a person but also a whole congregation can say. And it better bear repeating.

JGF: Several of the poems in Practice are written in very formal verse forms—sestinas, villanelles, sonnets. Does using formal verse help in writing liturgy?

Writing the Geulah piece, "roundabout by way of the wilderness," the form of the villanelle lent itself to what I was trying to say, that doubling back, that returning, that rethinking, you know, if only we had stayed in Egypt, no let's go forward, let's go back, there is no linear route to where we want to go. But also, as a group prayer, the rhyme, the musicality, lends itself to being said out loud and sounding good.

The sonnet form has worked that way for me in certain prayers. I think I just became fascinated by form. My first book has a lot of sestinas. My second book has none at all.

JGF: This has at least one.

Yes, there are two, but there are more sonnets—the whole sequence on the war in Iraq is in sonnets. There's also a sonnet in here that was part of my Bar Mitzvah ceremony. I had a Bar Mitzvah at Sha'ar Zahav in January 2002. My portion was Shemot, so the burning bush. "The voice in the fire" was the poem I wrote for that.

JGF: It's a fun poem. As I recall, it captures the fear and also the excitement of that moment.

What appealed to me, and spoke to me—and this was just

(continued on page 5)



From the Rabbi's Study



Rabbi Camille Shira Angel is on sabbatical. In lieu of her regular column, we present this FAQ.

What is a sabbatical?

The word Sabbatical has its root in the Torah concept of Sabbath—"to rest" or "to cease."

Sabbatical leave is a time for the rabbi to shift gears in order to rest, disengage, study, reflect, and travel, with the purpose of returning to serve the community refreshed and renewed in body, mind and spirit.

How long will Rabbi Angel be gone?

Rabbi Angel's current contract with Congregation Sha'ar Zahav specifies that she will take a five (5) month paid sabbatical twice during the term of this seven-year contract. Her first sabbatical will begin April 15, 2008 and she will return to us September 2, 2008. The second sabbatical is targeted for year six of her contract (2011-12) or the first half of year seven (2012).

Who will cover Rabbi Angel's responsibilities during her absence?

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, with our strong emphasis on skilled lay leadership, is well accustomed to tending to our needs during periods when our clergy have been absent. Thus we will continue to have regular vibrant Shabbat and holiday worship, led by members of our ritual committee, as well as Cantor Sharon Bernstein and Rabbinic Intern Reuben Zellman. Our professional staff and lay volunteers will also continue our inspiring and enriching adult education and other innovative programming.

Who will I call if I have a birth, death, or other lifecycle event?

Please contact Greg Lawrence at the CSZ office, who will continue to match you with clergy for your lifecycle needs. Cantor Bernstein in co-partnership with our Ritual Committee Chairs, Aaron Danzig and Randall Weiss will assist with

life cycle services and arrangements, including baby namings and brit milah, shiva minyanim and other special services. In the event of a funeral, Cantor Bernstein will work in conjunction with Rabbi Eric Weiss from the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center to provide services. Rabbis from neighboring congregations also have made themselves available in the event of emergency life cycle needs.

Who do I call if I have a family or personal crisis?

For counseling concerns, please contact our office and speak with Greg Lawrence. He will assist you in assessing your needs and coordinate putting you in contact with our counselor Randy Weled, Cantor Bernstein or Reuben Zellman, our Bikur Cholim Committee, or other local resources.

Will I be able to get in touch with Rabbi Angel during her Sabbatical?

No.

What if a question/concern arises while Rabbi Angel is gone?

During the period of Rabbi Angel's absence, questions and concerns should be brought to the attention of the congregation's president (Ora Prochovnick through the beginning of June, Alex Ingersoll thereafter). The President will serve as a "clearinghouse" for questions and concerns, sharing them as necessary with the Administrator, the Executive Committee, and/or the Va'ad. Ultimately, the Va'ad will exercise the authority to resolve all issues concerning synagogue life, with the President and/or Executive Committee addressing matters that require prompt action that must be resolved prior to the next Va'ad meeting.

Who can I speak with if I have further questions?

Please contact either the president, Ora Prochovnick, or the chair of the Rabbi Liaison Committee, Alex Ingersoll, if you have any further questions about Rabbi Angel's upcoming sabbatical.

Adapted from Clergy Renewal: The Alban Institute Guide to Sabbatical Planning by Richard Bullock and Richard Bruesehoff

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Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews, and the San Francisco Organizing Project



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Our Lag B'Omer



THIS IS the last of approximately a dozen columns that I have written for Sha'ar Zahav's Jewish Gaily Forward over the past two years as a part of my role as congregational president. I have valued this opportunity to communicate with you all, and count it among the awards—and challenges—of my service as president.

Although I am writing this article much earlier than it will appear, I am conscious of the fact that it will not be published until the May/June *Forward*. Almost exactly in the middle of this time period, is the somewhat mysterious and often ignored holiday of Lag B'Omer, which is celebrated this year on May 23rd. This holiday, literally the 33rd day of the Omer, falls during the period between Pesach and Shavuot, when we count each day as a means of preparing ourselves to move from the moment of liberation to revelation and the creation of a covenantal community at Mount Sinai.

Since post-Talmudic times the Omer period has traditionally been one of mourning. The traditional explanation for this mourning was that a plague (or perhaps political persecution by the Romans) befell the students of Rabbi Akiva, twenty-four thousand of whom are alleged to have died during this period. While there is a fairly wide range of opinion on the question of what this mourning period should entail, many observant Jews do not get married during this period, and do not shave, get haircuts, attend parties, dance or listen to live music.

As the story goes, Rabbi Akiva's students stopped dying on Lag B'Omer, and this day therefore became a time for celebration, when the prohibitions of the Omer period are suspended. Lag B'Omer is also said to mark the death of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who is credited with authoring the Zohar (the central mystical work of Judaism). While one might expect the yahrtzeit of a significant figure to be a period of sadness, the yahrtzeit of this mystical rabbi is considered a time of joy, as mystics believe that Bar Yochai revealed his most important secrets on his deathbed.

Whatever we might think about the historical accuracies of the stories of Rabbi Akiva's students or Bar Yochai, it is noticeable that both place an emphasis on balancing joy with mourning. It brings to mind the words of Kohelet, made more familiar to us by Pete Seeger and The Byrds, and found in Sha'ar Zahav's siddur: there is a time for weeping and a time for laughing; a time for mourning and a time for dancing. Moments of joy make us more attuned to the pain of life, and the experience of pain makes us more appreciative of the moments of joy.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav is famous for saying, "It is a great mitzvah always to be happy." While this line is often understood as an endorsement of pure joy, uninterrupted by the realities of life, Rabbi Nachman specified that the experience of joy should be balanced by a daily encounter with the misery of the world.

Those of us concerned with issues of Tikkun Olam tend to focus much more on the pain around us—after all, it's easy to see that funding for social services is declining, the Supreme Court is slowly chipping away at a women's right to choice, more and more people are being denied access to essential health care, irreversible climate change is threatening our planet, military and civilian casualties mount in Iraq with no solution in sight, . . . the list goes on. It is less common for us to spend time celebrating what is good about our world: the current election cycle has mobilized millions of people, many of whom have never before been involved in politics; health care and insurance is being made available to more people, in part through Sha'ar Zahav's work with SFOP; our California Supreme Court may be issuing a ruling legalizing same sex marriages just as this article is being read; people are making conscious efforts to reduce their carbon footprint; and thousands of creative and talented people are finding ways to transform their own communities into better places to live.

I am also contemplating this careful balancing of joy and difficulties as I reflect on my past two years serving as president of Sha'ar Zahav. Certainly there have been massive challenges, both in my personal life, coping (continued on page 9)

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What's Up at Sha'ar Zahav

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Learn What JFCS Can Do for You

MAY 28, 2008, 7:00 PM. Did you know that Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS) offers a wide array of resources for the LGBT Jewish community, including a counselor specifically available to Sha'ar Zahav congregants and resources on aging? Learn more at this informative event.

Community-Wide Havdalah

SATURDAY, MAY 31, 5:00. Join us once again as we consider the topic of sacred time and sacred space. We promise Jewish Yoga and more. See Page 6 for details.

CSZ Community Retreat

JUNE 6-8. Come enjoy Walker Creek Ranch with your CSZ community. Special pro-

gramming for adults as well as kids! Details on page 6.

Tikkun Leil Shavuot

SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 7:30 PM. Join us for a Ma'ariv, meal, and then a Torah study session into the late hours of the night as we celebrate the Jews' receiving of Torah at Mt. Sinai. Please contact the office for more details.

Pride Week is Coming!

Join Sha'ar Zahav for a full slate of Pride activities, including our famous Freedom Seder June 20, Pride Shabbat on June 27 (including the sneak-peek debut of our fabulous siddur), and the CSZ contingent at the June 29 Pride Parade. Details on Page 5.

East Bay Chavurah

FRIDAY, MAY 9, 6:00 - 9:00 PM; FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 6:00 - 9:00 PM. For more information, please email Sue Bojdak, bojdak-ates@sbcglobal.net; Jim Greenberg, jgjb@earthlink.net; and/or Richard Weiner, rweiner@nelsonnygaard.com.

CSZ-SFOP Organizing Committee Meeting

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 7:00 - 8:30 PM; THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 7:00 - 8:30 PM. Join the CSZ San

Francisco Organizing Project Committee meeting. We are currently working on increasing access to health care. Come to the meeting or, for more information, contact Josh Weisman josh@sfp.org.

Sing with Pride with the CSZ Chorus!

MONDAYS IN MAY AND JUNE, 7:00 - 9:00 P.M. Join the CSZ Chorus for our Pride rehearsal season. Musical background is not necessary to join the chorus! The only requirement is your commitment to being at the rehearsals and the service, and your desire to sing great music with fabulous people. For more information contact Reuben at reuben@shaarzahav.org, or (415) 861-6932 ext. 306.

Baruch and Beyond

TUESDAYS IN MAY, 6:45 - 8:45 PM. Okay, so you've been saying the words... but what on earth do they mean? And what do they mean to you? Please join us for this class on liturgy, the structure of the prayerbook, and finding our own ripples of meaning in the words of the prayers. For beginning through advanced daveners. For more information, please contact cantorbernstein@yahoo.com.



Jeffrey A. Miller Scholar in Residence

Dr. Joel L. Kushner is the first director of the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College - JIR. According to Dr. Kushner, long before he was a psychologist and an educator, he knew that he wanted children but also knew that it was not going to look like the traditional families that he saw around him.

Little did he know how long it would take to create the family he yearned for and the form that it would take. For Dr. Kushner's complete and official bio, you can visit the following link: <http://www.huc.edu/faculty/faculty/JoelKushner.shtml>. In addition to the info present in his bio, Joel is also Senior Editor of Kulanu and on the Boards of the LGBT Religious Archive Network and the National Religious Leadership Roundtable

The Schedule for the SIR Weekend is as follows:

Friday, May 16, Shabbat Services, 7:30 pm

Dr. Kushner reveals his personal narrative of being a queer Jewish father, laughing along the way with the various lessons learned from LGBT Jewish parenthood.

Saturday, May 17

MID DAY (FOLLOWING SHABBAT SERVICES)

As Gay Men, what are we obligated to teach our children of our body (or adoption) and the children of our community and how can Jewish texts help us?

Every parent wants to teach their children about life and values. However, as Gay Dads, there are crucial pieces of learning that we are uniquely suited to pass on. What are these pieces and how can Jewish texts assist us in this task?

AFTERNOON

A Panel discussion and LGBT Parent Discussion group

Sha'ar Zahav Takes Pride!

As the only GLBT shul in the GLBT capital of the United States, Congregation Sha'ar Zahav takes special pride in pride. This year marks a very special occasion for us, as we will be offering congregants a sneak peak at our spiffed up and expanded siddur on Pride Shabbat, June 27.

Many out of town visitors come to Sha'ar Zahav for this week, and we have planned an amazing set of activities for them and ourselves—but many of them still need your help to happen. Don't be shy—step up to volunteer for CSZ pride.

Synplex Freedom Shabbat and Seder

FRIDAY – SATURDAY, JUNE 20 – 21

Join us for this weekend long celebration with something for everyone! Be sure to attend our Pride Freedom Seder on Saturday evening, where you will experience an evening of poetry, story-telling, and music as we celebrate the anniversary of the Stonewall uprising and explore our Jewish/queer history, from the earliest days of the Torah to the amazing events of the present.

We are looking for people willing to help organize the seder—from pr to tables and chairs to co-leading the beauti-

ful services written by our congregants.

For those planning to attend, please bring a vegetarian dish to share (enough for five servings). Wine and juice are provided: a \$5 donation is requested to cover materials. Please pre-register by contacting Shaun in the office: shaun@shaarzahav.org, 415-861-6932 x304.

Pride Shabbat with our newly improved Sha'ar Zahav Siddur!

FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 7:30 PM

Come and celebrate LGBT Pride as we celebrate Shabbat with our own queer liturgy. The siddur committee has been working around the clock to give you a sneak preview of the “gimel” version of our siddur. Please come, celebrate the siddur, and give the siddur committee your feedback: they will be spending the summer proofing the siddur in preparation for printing it in time for the Jewish New Year.

CSZ in the Pride Parade

SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 10:30 AM

We welcome your presence as members of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav march, fabulously, of course, in this year's 38th Annual Pride Parade – Pride not Prejudice.

Dan Bellm's "Practice"

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months after 9/11—I really related to Moses as a character fighting the revelation so hard. He keeps telling this voice, I'm the wrong one, I have a burnt tongue, I don't speak so well, this is a bad idea, send someone else—but the voice of God is relentless and eventually impatient: shut up and go! I liked that struggle.

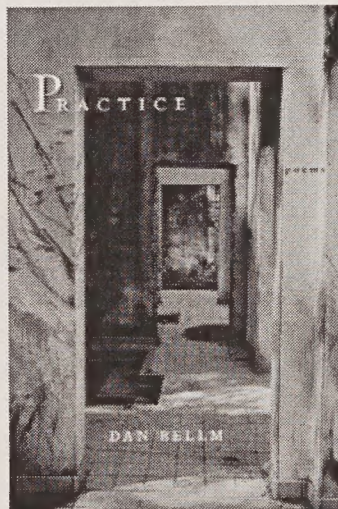
JGF: As I was reading through the book, I felt the first struggle in the poem about holding your early boyfriend's hand. It was the same kind of fear, and then an internal voice saying do it, do it, why won't you just do it!

I think I am enacting that kind of spiritual struggle over and over. I think that's why I settled on the book title “Practice.”

There is still that kind of struggle with my father and his spirit, even though he died thirteen years ago. I am trying to get it right.

JGF: In terms of your spiritual growth, you are a Jew by choice, and that was part of the struggle with your father, wasn't it?

I converted almost twenty years ago. It was one of the many things we clashed over. That was one of the many unbelievable developments of my adult life.



JGF: (laughs) Being gay,

Being politically rebellious, my hair, being anti-war. Leaving Catholicism at the age of fourteen, really, so there was a long period when I was really ex-Christian. Not antagonistic to religion, but not Christian. This was very distressing to my dad after the Catholic education I had had.

My mother did not have that reaction. When I told her I was converting, she told me she was really glad I had found something I could believe in.

For my dad, it was not just becoming a Jew, but being gay, being married to a rabbi, and then the final straw was becoming parents. He did not approve of that at first.

JGF: Do you see yourself breaking ground in terms of your role as rabbinical spouse?

It's not something I've ever wanted to take on. But even so, it wasn't until Yoel left the pulpit at Sha'ar Zahav that I felt freer to come out as an active member at Sha'ar Zahav for myself, and start co-leading services, giving sermons, serving on committees. We'll see what happens at Beth El. The community there is very welcoming, and ready to embrace Yoel and our family, but Sha'ar Zahav is still my congregation.

JGF: Well, we are really glad to have you here. Thanks for talking with us.

Shalom Families!

I HAVE HAD the opportunity to work in many different Jewish communities, and while there is always something fulfilling and meaningful about being a part of them, I have not before found the sense of *chevrah* (friendship) that is created here.

In short, we have something really special, and in my spare time between Purim carnivals and weekly updates and the over consumption of goldfish... I have tried to think of ways that we can improve things around here. My thoughts went to Phyllis who really had an amazing way of building Jewish values into her every day life. When she taught *mitzvot*, she taught from the holiest place of teaching.

I want to create an environment here where it is fun to do *mitzvot*. At any rate, I want the culture to be one where living our Jewish values is at the cornerstone of our Jewish identity. I really feel that in Jewish communities, the more you put in, the more you get out.

I also, however, am well aware that synagogues can sometimes feel like giant Jewish succubi... where the moment you walk through their doors they will deplete you of all your time and resources and nu... it will never be enough. I feel strongly that guilt-induced motivation is well... a little like chicken fat... for thousands of years, it was a staple of the Jewish home but now we need both a more user-friendly shmaltz.

So what would it look like if we created a culture of volunteerism at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer that was built around the idea of sacredness and spirituality? What if we were to create a volunteer mission where parents and

students didn't feel obliged but felt honored to be a part of building this wonderful school? What if we could create a culture of volunteerism where the volunteers felt truly appreciated, felt a deeper connection to the Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer community and a more spiritual expression of their Judaism? Well... it is my hope that I have devised a plan that will at least fulfill some of those goals. It is called the "Circle of Commitment".

Beginning in 2008-2009, the expectation is that one adult from each family system will make a commitment to be involved in the school in some volunteer capacity. These will range from large commitments (Bnei Mitzvah Mentors etc.) to smaller commitments (Teacher Appreciation coordinator, last day picnic planner etc.). The idea is that in the span of your child's education, through the volunteer efforts of you and others, your child will have an amazing, enriching, diverse and inclusive Jewish learning experience. We also hope and expect that many of the "volunteer" opportunities will actually be environments where you can deepen your Jewish learning and kavanah. Both you and your child will benefit.

I will be telling you more about the Circle of Commitment as the year comes to a close. I know if we build this Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer together, our young people will come and come again and most likely develop a life long sense of community and love of Judaism....

B'Shalom,
Rebecca

CALENDAR

FAMILY

Friday Night Live

FRIDAY MAY 2, 6:00 PM; FRIDAY JUNE 6, 6:00 PM. Calling all Kids! Bring yourselves and your favorite grown-ups to celebrate Shabbat with us. Designed for children 0 to 6 years, but all are welcome.

After, stay for dinner. We will provide pizza, but we encourage you to bring a vegetarian dish to share. If you wish to sponsor this or a future FNL dinner, please contact the synagogue office, 415-861-6932.

East Bay Chavurah

FRIDAY, MAY 9, 6:00 PM; FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 6:00 PM

The CSZ East Bay Chavurah will meet the 2nd Friday of each month at 6pm for a vegetarian potluck meal in someone's home. We'll share blessings and something from our week while we sing, eat, and enjoy one another's company. At around 7:30, those adults (and teens) who want are invited to continue our Shabbat experience with some text-based meaningful Jewish dialogue.

For more information, please email Sue Bojdak, bojdakyates@sbcglobal.net; Jim Greenberg, jgjb@earthlink.net; Terry Fletcher, tfletcher@california.com; and/or Richard Weiner, rweiner@nelsonnygaard.com.

Community Wide Havdalah

SATURDAY, MAY 31, 5:00 PM. In this third installment of our exciting and successful series of intergenerational community wide programs, we will tackle the topic of sacred time and space! We will be filling our building with a bevy of sacred experiences, from Shabbat Dinner to Jewish Yoga and Meditation: we

BEIT SEFER DATES TO REMEMBER

May 3	May 10	final class	June 6-8
Shabbat Class -	Shabbat Class	Celebration of	CSZ Community
Yasmine Siloh Bat	May 14	Learning - People of	Retreat
Mitzvah	Wednesday Class -	the Book	Have a great
May 7	Spiritual Quest Class	May 31	summer! See you
Wednesday Class-	May 17	Community Wide	next year!
Spiritual Quest Class	Shabbat Class -	Havdallah	

will have something for everyone!
For more information please
contact Kendra Lubalin at
kendra@shaarzahav.org.

CSZ Community Retreat—June 6-8

Sign up for CSZ's Annual Community Retreat, which will be held at Walker Creek Ranch in Petaluma. This year we are planning extra special fabulous and festive activities for families, adults, and children. Contact Rebecca Weiner ASAP to register at 415-861-6932 x302, rebecca@shaarzahav.org. \$195/Adult. \$100/child. \$60 pp/private room.

Our daughter, Yasmine (Yazzie) Shiloh, sister of Ivria and Naomi Ben-Or, and granddaughter of Ruth & Ron Miguel, will be Bat Mitzvah on May 3rd. We are as excited to share this day with all of you at CSZ, as we are excited to share CSZ with the friends and family who will be joining us.

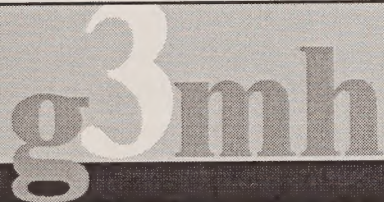
Yazzie is currently in 7th grade at Creative Arts Charter School in San Francisco. She loves singing, theatre arts, creative writing, discovering new bands and attending Camp Tawonga summer camp & Camp Keshet (her favorite times of the year).

Yasmine has a strong vibrant spirit that imbues all that she chooses to undertake. We are very pleased that with the guidance of Avi Goldberg, her mentor, she has chosen to undertake the study and practice required for her to become Bat Mitzvah. Our thanks go out to Andrew Ramer, Cantor Bernstein and Rabbi Angel for supporting our family through this time of transi-



tion. This is truly a community of many great role-models for Yazzie to follow.

Melanie Miguel and Michael Shiloh



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SO THERE I WAS, sitting oh so innocently (really!) in the sanctuary one *Shabbos* morning (well, actually, the service was already over, we'd made *kiddish* and *motzi*, and I was standing by myself, folding my *tallis*, but I was still innocent) when Jo Ellen Kaiser, the shul Editorial Maven, (or should I say *macher*?) came over and said, "You don't have to answer me right away, but I was hoping you'd consider writing a *Jewish Gaily Forward* column on ritual life." The *maven-macher* went on to say that it wouldn't be that onerous since the JGF is published only every other month, and that I wouldn't have to write each column if I didn't want to...etc, etc.

Hmm, was it the sunshine streaming in through the fused glass windows? Was it my guilt for having eaten *treif* the night before? Was it my ego in need of recognition? Or was it simply that I'd love to share my thoughts on our ritual life. Amazingly, I heard myself answer, "Sure." What really hooked me was when Jo Ellen said that she was hoping there could be some queer (or did she say gay?) bent to the articles. Since my mantra concerning all religious "stuff" is, "How is it relevant to my life today?" and since I'm both queer and Jewish, the

So, here goes my inaugural queer (or gay, or LBBTQQI) Jewish column focusing on ritual "stuff."

JGF and me seemed like a perfect match.

So, here goes my inaugural queer (or gay, or LBBTQQI) Jewish column focusing on ritual "stuff."

I suppose prior to pontificating (can Jews pontificate?) I should establish some street cred. Nope, I'm not an ordained rabbi nor an invested cantor. (There, that's your first lesson: in case you didn't know, cantors become invested, rabbis ordained). Of course this being Sha'ar Zahav, I probably have more latitude in my writings than clergy! And nope, I didn't study at yeshiva (my uncle did, while a kid in Shanghai, after his family fled Germany. but only for a year or two.) *Ani lo mitaber Ivrit*/I don't speak Hebrew. And the Pakistani cabbies in New Yawk probably have forgotten more Yiddish than I'll ever know.

So, you ask, what kind of credentials do I bring to the table? I've been part of a Torah Study group for over eighteen years; I'm a graduate of the intense two-year Wexner Heritage Program and an excerpt of one of my sermons has been published. However, I believe that more than book knowledge I hopefully bring a kind heart, a warm smile and open, welcoming arms. No, I'm not writing a sappy personal ad (although, yes, I am single!)

I accepted the honor of writing this column with the goal of helping others (and myself) feel more connected to Judaism. I think there's nothing more important to communi-

cate to readers (that's congregants, local non-congregants and readers all over the world thanks to the internet) than that religion is not big business, despite the fact that we need dues in order to keep the *nir tamid* lit. (Lesson 2: *nir tamid* = eternal light that is to remain lit above the Ark [which holds the Torah scrolls]). I also feel religion isn't about choreography: knowing whether to take three steps back or three steps forward during the *Amidah* (Lesson 3: you do both) or; as we do at CSZ, whether we're singing *Shevet achim*, *shevet kulanu*, or *shevet achayot gam yachad*. Yes, our shul has struggled, processed, debated and tabled until next month's committee meeting practically every word, color, design, size, shape and nuance of nearly everything. But we've struggled in hopes that each and every one of us in our rainbow of differences will feel welcome, respected, and embraced.

For me it all comes back to how good and pleasant it is for us to dwell together. [Lesson 4: that's the translation of *Hinei ma tov uma nayim shevet achayot gam ya chad*.] What organized religion offers to me, to all of us, is the opportunity to be a community, to pray, to sing, to support, to date, and to simply be with each other. How is it that when we're feeling lost (such as on 9/11) we congregate at 290 Dolores to get found? How is it that for many of us going to the Herbst Theatre each fall is as much about the Days of Awe as it is about reconnecting with our Sha'ar Zahav community? To *kibbitz* a little with this one, and give a peck on the cheek to that one. Our tradition of linking arms at the beginning and end of each service is the physical embodiment of reaching out, and creating community.

I'm not sure exactly what slant my columns will take; partly it will be based on the input I receive from you, the reader (please don't let me use that schmaltzy refrain: "you never call, you never write!") But if I can help one person get more in touch with their connection to their Jewishness, or help demystify some seemingly arcane tradition, or weave together our gay and human personas (no matter which genders you identify with and which genders you want to lick from nape to toe) with the wonderful richness of 5768 years of Jewish life, then perhaps, just perhaps I've done something good.

And as we're in the period of the *omer*, may your counting of the *omer* be for good. (The *omer* can be a lesson into itself if you're interested).

On behalf of ritual 'stuff' but not officially sanctioned by the Ritual Committee,

Howard Steiermann

p.s. A huge hug and thanks to Nina Wouk who has penned the ritual column for ages (perhaps since the Exodus?) and will continue off and on, as her time and energy permit. I have learned much through her writings. *Todah raba* (thank you).

Update from Sha'ar Zahav's SFOP

By Kelley Clements

My name is Kelley Clements. I've been a member of Sha'ar Zahav for several years now and am also part of our San Francisco Organizing Project local organizing committee. I'd like to share my personal story as a way of explaining why I and others are so passionately focused on organizing for better health care.

I have been without any health care insurance for three years, paying for all doctor's visits and prescriptions out-of-pocket. I would like to buy health care, but my family history of diabetes, cancer, and high blood pressure makes me a poor risk for the insurance companies. As a result, I haven't found a plan I can afford.

I know, given my family history, that I should see a doctor more often than I do. Preventive medicine would lower my overall health care costs and improve the quality (and perhaps the length) of my life. But without insurance, I can't afford regular care, and so I try to monitor myself the best I can.

Even so, during these three years without insurance, I've had some health scares. What makes them worse has been the frustration of trying to find a doctor I could pay out of pocket who was taking new patients and could see me immediately. That mixture of fear and frustration is something

I hope no one else has to go through.

I haven't sat on my hands. I helped fight for the Healthy San Francisco program and hoped to sign up for it when it started. The program has been going for nine months now and I have filled out the paperwork and met with people to go over forms—only to be turned down because I'm not in the income bracket they are currently allowing in the program. They have no solid timeline for opening the program to people in my income bracket. I have been told it could take as long as two years before I will be allowed entrance.

So, as it stands, I've fought for a universal health care program that is not universal and has no timeline as to when it will be universal. Additionally, new cuts are coming to the Department of Health that will affect Healthy San Francisco, so the program will not include everything we were promised. I am frustrated and disappointed because I can't get more information. I understand that they need time to do this properly but I really feel left out in the cold. And I know I'm not the only one.

It would be easy to give up, but that would mean giving up on myself. Instead, I'm continuing to fight. Our politicians always say, "we can do better." Well, I think we should hold them to that. I ask you to join me and the SFOP to help make universal health care a reality in San Francisco.

Our Lag B'Omer

(continued from page 3)

with the death of my father and more recently the disintegration of my workplace, and in the life of our congregation, including a complete turn over in staff, budgetary concerns, too much to do in too little time, miscommunications and hurt feelings.

But I remember that while the omer period gives us a chance to mourn, each in our own way, on Lag B'Omer, we are told to ask ourselves: what can we celebrate? And there is so much that we have to celebrate as a congregation. We have accomplished amazing things over the past two years:

growing our relationship with our beloved rabbi, as we entered into a new seven year contract with Rabbi Camille Shira Angel, including supporting the sabbatical on which she has now embarked;

- bringing on Cantor Sharon Bernstein as Congregation Sha'ar Zahav's first cantor, as we seek to enhance the musicality and spirituality of our services;
- the amazing work and creativity of our rabbinic intern, Reuben Zellman;
- the hiring of Rebecca Weiner, our fabulous new Director of Child and Family Education;
- our incredible staff, including Regina Wurst, Greg

Lawrence and Shaun Hannon;

- the redesigning of our sanctuary with the installation of our new bima;
- the publication of CSZ's unique and innovative siddur;
- strengthening our fiscal soundness through the work of our fund development committee;
- reaching out to bring in new members while strengthening our connections with newer and longtime members;
- the ground-breaking social justice work of SFOP in creating access to health care;
- our exciting new children's education and family programming, such as the Galei Limudim and Community Havdalahs;
- our Trans-shabbat celebration;
- supporting and caring for one another in times of grieving and of celebration;

The list could go on and on: I am so proud of us.

I appreciate all of the support I have received from our paid staff and lay volunteers, not to mention my incredibly tolerant family. I look forward to sharing more details about our accomplishments together as a congregation and my appreciations to all who have moved us forward to this place of celebration at our Congregational Meeting on Monday, May 19, 2008. I hope to see many of you there.

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Roberta Achtenberg
Lynn Eden & Ruth Schoenbach
Arthur Slepian & Gerry Llamado

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Ron Lezell in memory of his father,
Sam Lezell.

George Mintzer in memory of his
brother, Meyer Mintzer.

Jeanette Nichols in honor of Mike
Klayman.

Harold Podgur in memory of Mollie
Podgur.

Ora Prochovnick & Rena Frantz in
memory of Sylvia Radovich.
in memory of Suzanne Shine.

Jennifer Ramsey in memory of Adrienne
Gordon.

Barry Schmell & Joe Costa in memory
of Barry's mother, Shirley Schmell.

Stephen Shotland thank you to
Rabbi Angel.

Arthur Slepian & Gerry Llamado in
memory of Sylvia Radovich.
in honor of Minne Fekkes.

The Mensch Group a thank you to
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in memory of her mother, Ann Kohout

Ami Zusman in memory of
Sylvia Radovich.

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Samuel Rodriguez

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Elizabeth & Michael Schaffer

Stephen Shotland in appreciation of

Rabbi Angel and with best wishes for
her sabbatical.

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01/02

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08/09

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15/16

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22/23

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Friday Oneg Generously Sponsored by **Larry Best & Ming Leung** In honor of the naming of their son, Adam MohLin Best-Leung.

February 29 / March 1

Bimah Flowers Generously Sponsored by **Rose Anne Donner Colt** In memory of her father, Isaac Donner.

Friday Oneg Generously Sponsored by **Carol Barnett** In memory of her father, Phillip Barnett, and in memory of Howard Barnett, her brother and son of Evelyn Barnett & the late Phillip Barnett, who's first yahrzeit will be observed on March 14th, 2008.

March

07/08

Oneg & Bimah Flowers Generously Provided in Celebration of Shabbat Across America / Bring A Friend to Shabbat

Friday Night Live Dinner Generously Sponsored by **The Wellsfry Family** In loving memory of Nathan's Grandpa Sid.

14/15

Bimah Flowers Generously Sponsored by **Minne Fekkes & Jonathan Arnowitz** In honor of Minne's Welcoming into the Covenant.

Friday Oneg Generously Sponsored by **Minne Fekkes & Jonathan Arnowitz** In honor of Minne's Welcoming @ CSZ's New Members.

Friday Night Childcare Generously Sponsored by **Andrew Ramer** In memory of Irmgard Baum, second mother to Andrew & in honor of Minne's Welcoming into the Covenant.

28/29

Bimah Flowers Generously Sponsored by **James Carlson** In memory of Richard Roginski.

Friday Oneg Generously Sponsored by **Paul Cohen & Bob Gutterman** In memory of Joseph Cohen & wishing Rabbi Angel a re-energizing Sabbatical.

Friday Night Childcare Generously Sponsored by **Richard Meyerson** In honor of Rabbi Angel as she begins her Sabbatical and all those embarking on CSZ's trip to Eastern Europe.

Saturday Kiddush Generously Sponsored by **Don Fischer** In honor of Rabbi Angel as she begins her Sabbatical.

We would like to introduce you to the Cantor Liaison Committee. The CLC is currently chaired by Elizabeth Schaeffer, and its other members include: Daniel Chesir, Ora Prochovnick, Andrew Ramer, Amy Scharf and Arthur Slepian.

The Liaison Committee meets monthly with Cantor Sharon Bernstein to provide her with advice and support as she and Congregation Sha'ar Zahav begin our relationship together and learn to work with one another. Sometimes the committee serves as a sounding board for the Cantor as she seeks to float new proposals. We try to serve as the eyes and ears of the community as we seek to present the views of the various constituencies which we represent. Although we always encourage individuals to approach Cantor Bernstein directly with any particular concerns they might have, committee members also serve as a conduit to communicate such concerns.

Please feel free to approach any of us with any matters which you would like to discuss. As a committee we are all honored to take part in this work and look forward to developing our relationship with our new Cantor.



Andrew Ramer, Ken Johnson, Richard Meyerson and Reuben Zellman glam it up for Purim.

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who made this Purim the best yet. Names will be coming in the next JGF: in the meantime, enjoy the pix!

Thank you to all of you who brought a friend to our annual "Bring a Friend to CSZ"; it was a great success! Especially huge thank yous go out to (in no particular order) **Judy Schwartz, Ellen Murland, Marty Rawlings-Fein, Daniel Meyer-O'Keeffe, Nancy Meyer, Isaac Zones, Ora Prochovnick, Karen Schiller, Alan Michels, Avi Goldberg, Cantor Sharon Bernstein, Gerry Llamado, Laureen Kim, Leslie Meissner, and Jackie Kaplan.** "Bring a Friend" would not have been so fabulous were it not for your efforts!

Naches

Yishar Koach to **Susan Tubbesing** for being awarded the highly prestigious 2008 Alfred E. Alquist Medal for Outstanding Achievement in Earthquake Safety. She was awarded this honor by

the California Earthquake Safety Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to raising the level of public awareness and commitment to earthquake safety in California. Thank you, Susan, for working to keep all of us safe!

Yishar Koach to the SFOP Clergy, which includes our very own **Rabbi Camille Shira Angel**, and the Honorable **Bevan Dufty** (father of CSZ member **Sidney Goldfader-Dufty**), both of whom were awarded SFOP 2008 Community Builder Awards!

Yishar Koach to **Neil Hart**, whose work appeared in *Architects as Artists* in the Hilliard Architects gallery through April 18.

Yishar Koach to **Jo Ellen Gren Kaiser**, who has become the Editor-in-Chief of Zeek magazine and steered its new joint venture with Jewcy, www.jewcy.com/zeek.

Yishar Koach to **Dan Bellm**, whose book of poetry entitled *Practice: A Book of Midrash*, was published on March 1.

Yishar Koach to **Anne Bluethenthal**, who recently produced a dance piece

entitled *CARINO: Economy of the Heart*, which ran in SF from March 21-27.

Yishar Koach to **Randy Weiss**, who performed beautifully at all three installments of this year's Music in the Mishkan. If you were not able to make it to this year's outstanding violin performances by Randy, along with the many other highly talented musicians with whom he performed, be sure to catch him next year!

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members to the Sha'ar Zahav community, all of whom joined between the months of Jan-March, 2008:

Rick Crane, Ernest and Kathleen Friedlander, Kendra Froshman, Michael Hellman, Judy Huerta, Jim Van Buskirk, Carol Barnett, Cassie Angely, Jonathon Thunderword, Julie Goot and her daughter Noa Mendoza-Goot, Jacob Robinson, Marty Fox, and William Fike.

Life Cycles

We are pleased to announce the birth of **Joshua Milo Lin Weissleder** on Wednesday, February 13, nephew of Patricia Lin (and her parents' first grandchild!).

Mazel Tov to **Adam MohLin Best-Leung**, and his fathers **Larry Best** and **Ming Leung**. On Feb. 22 at CSZ, Adam received the Hebrew name Litman Moshe ben Eliezer v'Mingyew.

Mazel tov to **Minne Fekkes**, who was received into the Jewish covenant at CSZ on March 14.

Mazel tov to **Jacqui Shine**, and her partner **Britta Olsen**, on the announcement of their engagement! Jacqui and Britta, we wish you an abundance of simchot in your union of lives together!

Shavuot: Ruth as Prophet By Nina Wouk

Shavuot this year falls on June 8. A holiday celebrating receiving the Torah at Sinai, Shavuot is also the holiday set aside for reading the story of Ruth.

In the story, Ruth, the Moabite ancestor of King David, is rewarded for her difficult choice to follow her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi. What gave her the strength to say to a despairing and destitute widow, who had no legal claim on her, "Where you I will go, where you stay I will stay, your people are my people and your G-d my G-d?" The key is of course in the final phrase; appropriately for Shavuot, she has chosen to live in a Jewish relationship to G-d.

How did she make this choice? As midrash tells us, all Jewish souls were assembled at Mount Sinai for the giving of the Torah. Ruth at some point remembered this event, but what made her remember? One possible answer

lies in the Torah and haftorah readings for these two days of Shavuot.

The first day of Shavuot, we read of the theophany at Mount Sinai, of the thunder and lightning and the mountain smoking and trembling, of the shofar call growing louder and louder, until Moshe spoke and G-d answered with a Voice. This singular revelation, not to an individual prophet but to an entire people, created us as a people with a purpose and a destiny.

That destiny was to be fulfilled in the Holy Temple, in the Land of Israel. However the haftorah speaks of the apparent ruin of both people and purpose. Ezekiel's vision came to him in exile, far from the Land, and from the Temple—which at the time was being used in corrupt ways and likely to be destroyed. Yet his vision was of a moving, living vehicle that carried the divine presence equally in all directions throughout the world, even to the dispirited exiled Is-

raelites.

The second day's Torah reading seems tame by comparison: We are told to increase our possessions - symbolized by cattle and harvests - in gratitude to G-d, and observe the festivals with joy, thankfulness, and the giving of tzedakah. These traditions embody and connect us to the mission revealed at Sinai.

The haftorah for this portion is more challenging: The prophet Habakkuk, foreseeing a war as fearful as the plagues of Egypt, still understands the coming convulsion as a sign of G-d's power and hopes to be redeemed in the end as his ancestors were from slavery. He concludes, "though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail and fields shall yield no food, the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in Hashem, I will exult in the G-d of my salvation."

I think that these readings together can show us the path that Ruth might have taken toward joining herself to the covenant: From Naomi, she knew that G-d had given the Jews an incomparable purpose and mission. Even when Naomi's family was forced to leave their native land, G-d travelled with them, as in Ezekiel's vision. Ruth knew this because Naomi continued to live by G-d's torah, practicing tzedakah and rejoicing on the festivals, preserving the customs of gratitude, of sharing, and of believing that G-d wants us to be altogether happy. Thus even when disaster struck, and Naomi's husband and sons all died leaving her alone in her old age, Ruth was able to make the same leap as Habakkuk, from present terror to hope of redemption. This path brought her to remember her own presence at Mount Sinai, Her choice to live based on that memory brought a redeemer to her, to Naomi, and, in time as we hope, to us all.

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Condolences

We extend heartfelt condolences to the following Sha'ar Zahav members on the death of their loved ones:

Florence and Steven Nacamulli, on the death of their friend, Fredda Slobin.

Imre Schwartz, uncle of Michael Tyler

Bill Ashley-Dobbin, longtime member of our congregation

Evelyn Igdaloff, mother of Nancy Igdaloff

Toby Kaufman, cousin of Chanah Harei-Orr

Medina, brother by choice of Rachel MacLachlan

Sylvia Radovich, mother of Lydia Zinn, mother-in-law of David Zinn

Member Yahrzeits

May

- 1 Liselotte Huth
- 9 Jack Jacobs
- 13 David Delroy
- 14 Thomas Yazman
- 16 David Weinstein
- 17 Nanci Stern
- 19 Allan Altman
- 20 Robert Coffman
- 21 James Perkins
- 24 David Loeb

June

- 2 Mark Feldman
- 8 Robert Nehemiah Mackey
- 9 Duff Kreitzberg
- 14 Mirtha Beal
- 15 Barry Siegel
- 16 Richard Rath
- 17 Joe Zygielbaum
- 20 William Valentine

Bikkur Cholim Benefit: Jeffrey Lilly Reads from his Poetry

Sunday, May 25, 4:00 pm @ CSZ

Jeffrey Lilly, whose recording of his poetry accompanied by the music of H.C. Reumschuessel received praise from such artists as Harold Norse, James Broughton, Neeli Cherdovski and Jack Foley, will be reading from new and old work at Sha'ar Zahav this May.

Dane Johnson, a Comparative Literature professor at San Francisco State called Lilly's work the "poetry of the sacred." Lilly's poetry merges a gay sensibility with religious metaphors that reflect his writing before and after his conversion to Judaism in 1992.

The reading will benefit Sha'ar Zahav's Bikkur Cholim society. Audience members will be asked to make a \$10 donation at the door.

Please Be in Touch With Me

I am eager to be in touch with all members of the CSZ family whenever there are occasions of joy or sadness in your lives.

Where there is a death in the family, please call me as soon as possible.

We very much want to be there with you at a time of grief.

*Rabbi Camille
Shira Angel*

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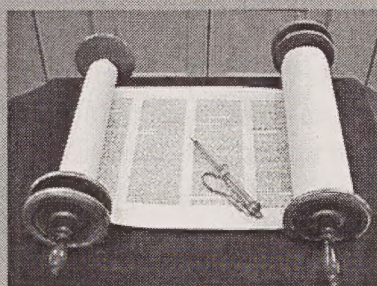
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Kiddush Cups



Matzah Covers
Tallitot
Kippot
Seder Plates

Gift Shop

Open 1st Friday, 7:30-8pm, all other weeks 6:45-7:20pm or by appointment. Call 861-6932.

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

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Rabbi Camille Shira Angel



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San Francisco, CA

Permit # 12628

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 7:00 pm Chorus Rehearsal	1 IYYAR 5768 6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 6:45 pm Baruch and Beyond	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 7:00 pm Membership Committee Meeting 7:00 pm SFOP meeting	6:00 pm Friday Night Live Family Service 8:15 pm Shabbat Service	9:00 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service Yasmine Siloh Bat Mitzvah
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 7:00 pm Chorus Rehearsal	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 6:45 pm Baruch and Beyond	Azkarah Service: 6:00 pm Informal discussion 7:00 pm Service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 6:45 pm Va'ad Meeting	7:30 pm Shabbat Service Israel's 60th BD-Synaplex Shabbat	9:00 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 7:00 pm Annual Congregational Meeting	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 6:45 pm Baruch and Beyond	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	7:30 pm Shabbat Service	9:00 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
4:00 pm Jeffrey Lilly poetry reading 6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	Memorial Day, Office Closed 6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv Service and Ritual Committee meeting	7:30 pm Shabbat Service	9:00 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service 5:00 pm Community Wide Havdalah
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
6:30 pm Ma'ariv Service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv Service 7:00 pm Chorus Rehearsal	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	1 SIVAN 5768 6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 7:00 pm Membership Committee Meeting 7:00 pm SFOP meeting	Community Retreat weekend 8:15 pm Shabbat Service	9:00 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6:30 pm Ma'ariv Service 9:00 pm Tikun Liel Shavuot	Shavuot – Office Closed 6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	7:30 pm Shabbat Service	9:00 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 7:00 pm Chorus rehearsal	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 7:00 pm Chorus rehearsal	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 6:45 pm Va'ad Meeting	7:30 pm Shabbat Service Installation of Va'ad	Erev Pesach 9:00 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service Bar Mitzvah of Marty Fox 5:00 pm Freedom Seder
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 7:00 pm Chorus rehearsal	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service 6:30 pm Ritual Committee Meeting	7:30 pm Shabbat Service Pride Shabbat	9:00 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
6:30 pm Ma'ariv service	6:30 pm Ma'ariv service					
29	30					